



# Career advice

Lesson code: BNA3-B7NF-5F16

PRE-INTERMEDIATE

## 1 Key words

Read the sentences below and match the underlined words and phrases to their definitions:

1. I always leave work a little early in order to avoid the traffic.
  2. This computer is totally outdated. Can I get a more modern one?
  3. Please take your time. Don't rush your work!
  4. Don't blame John for the mistake. It wasn't his fault.
  5. Anne used some very bad language during the meeting. Her behaviour was totally inappropriate.
  6. Joe always has positive things to say about his colleagues. He tries not to bad-mouth anybody.
- 
- a. criticize someone in a very unpleasant manner
  - b. do something too quickly
  - c. not suitable in a particular situation
  - d. old-fashioned
  - e. say that someone is responsible for something
  - f. stay away from

## 2 Reading

You are going to read an article about phrases to avoid in your career. First, look at the remarks below. Do you think it is a bad idea to use them at work? Why? Next, read the article and put each phrase above the correct paragraph like in the example.

- a. "It's not my fault."
- b. "No problem."
- c. "I hate this job."
- d. "I think .../This may be a silly idea .../I'm going to ask a stupid question."
- e. "This will only take a minute."
- f. "I'll try."
- g. "He's lazy/incompetent/a jerk."
- h. "That's not in my job description."
- i. "It's not fair."
- j. "I can't."



# 10 things you shouldn't say at work

Avoiding these phrases will help you in your career.

- 1 Dr. Travis Bradberry, the co-founder of the testing and training company TalentSmart, said that weak remarks and words can damage careers.
- 2 "There are certain phrases that instantly change the way people see you," Dr. Bradberry said in a LinkedIn article. But avoiding these phrases is more difficult than you think. The 10 career killers you shouldn't say at the office are:
- 3 "It's not fair"  
Everyone knows that life isn't fair. Saying "it's not fair" suggests that you think life should be fair, which makes you look immature and naive.
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>2</sup>  
When someone asks you to do something or thanks you for doing something, and you tell them "no problem", it suggests that their request should normally be a problem. Instead, you should show people that you're happy to do your job. Say something like "It was my pleasure" or "I'll be happy to take care of that."
- 5 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>3</sup>  
These passive phrases instantly make you sound less credible. Even if you have a great idea, they suggest that you don't have much confidence. So try to avoid them. And, if you really don't know something, say, "I don't have that information right now, but I'll find out."
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>4</sup>  
If you say that something only takes a minute, people will think that you rush your tasks. If you're literally not going to complete the task in 60 seconds, then say that it 'won't take long'.
- 7 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>5</sup>  
Just like the word 'think', 'try' sounds weak and suggests that you don't have much confidence. Be confident in your capabilities. If you're asked to do something, either say you will do it or offer to do something different. But don't say that you'll try because it sounds like you won't try very hard.
- 8 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>6</sup>  
You shouldn't make negative remarks about a colleague. If your remark is true, everybody already knows it, so you don't need to say it. There will always be rude or incompetent people in any workplace, and everyone probably knows who they are. If you can't help them work better or fire them, then bad-mouthing them will only make you look bad.
- 9 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>7</sup>  
If you use this phrase, your boss will think that you are only interested in doing the minimum amount of work required. If your boss asks you to do something that you feel is inappropriate for your position, you should complete the task. Later, schedule a conversation with your boss to discuss your role in the company and whether your job description needs an update.
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>8</sup>  
It's never a good idea to blame other people. If something went wrong, explain what happened in an objective way and let your boss and colleagues decide who is responsible. When you start pointing fingers, you will make people nervous. Some people will avoid working with you, and others will blame you first when something goes wrong.
- 11 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>9</sup>  
People don't like to hear "I can't" because they think it means that you don't want to do something. If you really can't do something because you don't have the necessary skills, you need to offer a different solution. For example, instead of saying "I can't stay late tonight," say "I can come in early tomorrow morning. Will that work?"
- 12 \_\_\_\_\_<sup>10</sup>  
The last thing anyone wants to hear at work is someone complaining about how much they hate their job. This is bad for the morale of the group and you will look like a negative person.

*Adapted from The Independent, by Zlata Rodionova, 14 October 2015*



### 3 Checking understanding

Answer the questions below.

1. Which phrase makes other people nervous?
2. Which phrase makes you look negative?
3. Which phrase makes you look lazy?
4. Which phrase makes you look like you do things too quickly and without taking care?
5. Which phrase makes other people not want to work with you?
6. Which phrase should you avoid if somebody says 'Thank you'?
7. Which three phrases show that you are not ready or happy to do your tasks?

### 4 Find the word ...

Find a word or phrase in the article which means ...

1. someone who establishes a company with another person or other people (*noun, P1*): \_\_\_\_\_
2. makes something seem to be true (*verb, P3*): \_\_\_\_\_
3. If you have \_\_\_\_\_ (*noun, P5*), you are certain about your abilities.
4. to tell someone they must leave their job (*verb, P8*): \_\_\_\_\_
5. blaming other people (*phrase, P10*): \_\_\_\_\_
6. the amount of confidence or hope for the future that people feel (*noun, P12*): \_\_\_\_\_

### 5 Should/shouldn't for advice and expectation

Study the sentences from the text and the table on the next page:

- You should show people that you're happy to do your job.  
(= *It's a good idea to show people that you're happy to do your job.*)
- You shouldn't make negative remarks about a colleague.  
(= *It's a bad idea to make negative remarks about a colleague.*)
- ... it suggests that their request should normally be a problem.  
(= *... it suggests that you normally expect their request to be a problem.*)



affirmative forms	negative forms	questions
I should	I shouldn't (= I should not)	Should I?
You should	You shouldn't	Should you?
He/she/it should	He/she/it shouldn't	Should he/she/it?
We should	We shouldn't	Should we?
You should	You shouldn't	Should you?
They should	They shouldn't	Should they?

**Short answers**

Yes, I should. / Yes, you should. ...

No, I shouldn't. / No, you shouldn't. ...

**6 Grammar practice 1****Rewrite the sentences using 'should' or 'shouldn't':**

1. It's a bad idea to be late for work every day.

You shouldn't be late for work every day.

2. It's a good idea to drink some coffee if you are sleepy.

.....

3. It's a good idea to take a break from time to time.

.....

4. It's a bad idea to go to work if you have the flu.

.....

5. It's very cold today. I didn't expect that.

It .....

6. Is it a good idea for me to arrive before 9am?

.....?

7. I expect that the boss is in his office right now.

The boss .....

8. I expect that the letter will arrive before Thursday.

The letter .....

9. It's a good idea to wear smart clothes for your job interview.

.....





**7 Grammar practice 2**

Complete the table below. Decide if each piece of career advice is a good or bad idea.

	Good idea	Bad idea
Focus only on your salary.		
Take risks.		
Do everything that your boss asks.		
Avoid difficult tasks.		
Always look for a better job.		
Work hard.		

Now work in pairs. Ask and answer questions about the table below like in the example.

*"Should I focus only on my salary?" / "No, you shouldn't"*

**8 Talking point**

Do you agree with the advice in the article? Can you think of any other phrases that you should avoid at work?

